

B2 3. (Twice amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio is at least 25:1.

4. (Twice amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the binder comprises an aqueous solution stabilized by a silicate substituted by at least one anionic group of lower pKa than silicic acid, having a pH of 7 to 10.5 prepared by lowering the pH of a solution of silicate and silicate by ion exchange.

B3 13. (Twice amended) A method of using an aqueous solution of an inorganic salt of concentration at least 0.01M as a spray treatment of steel primer coated with a primer coating comprising an aqueous silica sol binder having a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 6:1.

14. (Twice amended) A method of using a silicate or alkoxysilane solution as a spray treatment of steel primer coated with a primer coating comprising an aqueous silica sol binder having a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 6:1.

Please add the following new claims:

15. (New) A process according to claim 1 wherein the binder further comprises an alkali metal silicate.

B4 16. (New) A method according to claim 13 wherein the binder further comprises an alkali metal silicate.

17. (New) A method according to claim 14 wherein the binder further comprises an alkali metal silicate.

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please insert the following abstract on a separate page following the claims.